

the
POLISH REVIEW



W. GURAHOWSKI

WARSAW CAROL

by STANISLAW BALINSKI

*Oh Holy Mother! Let the birthday of Thy Son
Come later pray.
Let not the eyes of the Creator look upon
Our plight today.
This year, oh Mother, let Thy dearest Babe be born
'Neath brighter skies.
But not among us. Here our city lost, forlorn,
In ruin lies.
In our beloved Warsaw which Thou dost recall
From other years,
The crosses have grown up, the cemeteries all
Are blood and tears.
Our little children, Holy Mother, all are dead
From shrapnel shot.
Oh! Holy Mary, pray for us in His sweet stead
But here come not!
And if His birthplace be withall the smoking earth
Of Warsaw's loss,
Then Thou hadst better place the Heav'nly Babe at birth
Upon His cross.*

—Translated by
ELIZABETH CLARK REISS



Angel of Mercy, sculpture in wood by Maryla Lednicka.

Best Wishes

To all true friends of Poland
who feel good will towards
the martyred Polish nation
now awaiting its long-delayed
liberation.

The Polish Review

CHRISTMAS IN PAIN AND HOPE

by JOSEPH P. JUNOSZA, Director of the Polish Government Information Center



SYMBOLIC in character is the front cover of this issue of *THE POLISH REVIEW*. Amid the ruins of heroic Warsaw, symbolizing an indomitable resistance against the invader, a new life is budding. In the darkest hour of our national existence, apparently abandoned by all our friends, we do not despair, we cannot cease hoping that justice will prevail.

Because of this hope and faith in the equity of the Polish Cause, the Polish soldier—wherever he is fighting: in his mother country or on any other front, in western or southern Europe—wins signal victories. Monte Cassino, Ancona, Northern France, Belgium, and Holland have witnessed the epic deeds of the Polish soldier, splendid proofs of his physical and spiritual valor.

To Warsaw, however, belongs the honor of having shown the greatest heroism of the Polish Nation during the 63 days of its unforgettable insurrection.

More than a million citizens of Warsaw have sacrificed all their possessions and thousands of them their life for their country. Hundreds of thousands of Polish men and women are constantly giving their health and life to the sacred Cause in German concentration camps, as well as in distant Central Asia or the tundras of Siberia.

During the recent insurrection the Warsaw radio station "Błyskawica" daily broadcast the slogan: "No price is too high for a Pole to pay for freedom."

There are countries where Christmas remains a Holy Day of joy and peace, countries that have not been invaded by the enemy, cities that have not been bombed, homes where the fire of the hearth dispenses pleasant warmth and permits people to forget that somewhere, far away, mankind is still fighting its most bloody war.

There are countries, too, where after a dreary period of occupation freedom is returning; where people, though still hungry and cold, find consolation in the hope of a better morrow. They are beginning to rebuild their destroyed homes and their dispersed families

are coming together again after years of separation. We, Poles, however, belong neither to the first nor to the second category.

The Polish soldier was the first to lose his home and family, to sacrifice what he loved most for the cause of freedom. Today when freedom dawns for other nations, when other cities successively cast away the yoke of slavery and the victorious armies of the United Nations are beginning to crush the walls of the fortress Germania—Poland continues to suffer the nightmare of occupation and her future is still insecure.

Today, after years of ups and downs when the scales of victory seemed to be tipping in the opposite direction, the tenacity and valor of the Allies have made ultimate victory a foregone conclusion. The Polish soldier, shoulder to shoulder with our Allies, advances victorious.

It would appear evident that Poland, the first country to resist German aggression, the only one who never produced a Quisling, has an undeniable right to freedom and recompensation for the losses she has suffered. Millions of exhausted Poles in their own country, hundreds of thousands of Polish soldiers on all the fronts are fighting with the indestructible faith that the lofty slogans of the Atlantic Charter will not become a scrap of paper.

And yet events seem to be taking quite a different course. Apparently "spheres of influence" and not the righteousness of the cause, principles of justice, or the sum of our war efforts are to decide our future. Millions of people have

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Flight into Egypt, woodcut by Edmund Bartłomiejczyk.

SEVEN CHRISTMASES — THE ODYSSEY OF A FIGHTING POLE 1938-1944

by ZYGMUNT

JUSZKIEWICZ

WIGILIA or Christmas Eve for a Pole is perhaps the most important of all holidays. The high point of the entire year, it is strictly a family ceremony traditionally celebrated at one's own hearthside surrounded by members of the immediate family as well as any stranger who chances by. For it is an old Polish tradition never to turn anyone away from the door on that holy evening when Christ was born.

Today, however, Poles, both those still in Poland and those fighting abroad are forced to spend the Christmas Holidays far from home and loved ones. For many of them *Wigilia* will be but another evening, spent in a forest hideout of the Home Army in Poland, in the ruins of some once beautiful Polish city, or on duty with the armed forces of Poland fighting abroad, on land, at sea or in the air.

Had anyone told me in 1938 that I was about to spend my last Christmas in Poland for a long, long time; that just one year later I would be in France, and then in succession in London, Scotland, Nigeria, Capetown, Italy, and Holland, I probably would have laughed in his face! But that's exactly how it all turned out!

I spent the entire morning of December 24, 1938, in full dress at the inspection of our Brigade. We were then stationed in Cracow. After we went off duty, I was faced with my first Christmas away from home. Military duty prevented me from going home to Kutno. I had been invited by a family that lived on Cieszynski Street. They had a small tree and all the trimmings that make a real Polish Christmas. Nevertheless, I couldn't help wishing that I was home. At midnight we all walked to St. Mary's Church for the mass. The streets were freshly covered with a crisp clean snow that crunched under our feet. At midnight we heard the trumpeter in the tower of St. Mary's. We were all happy and satisfied with life the way it was.

DECEMBER 24, 1939—BESSIERES BARRACKS

How clearly I remember the red walls of the dirty barracks



In France, 1939.

full of soldiers who despite the gala occasion were downhearted and unnaturally quiet.

Since noon I and several others had been busy preparing the Christmas tree for *Wigilia*. Ladies of the "Friends of Poland" society arrived to lend a hand in the preparations. They came laden with little packages, each one inscribed "*Vive la Pologne!*" For the first time in my life I participated in Franco-Polish co-operation. It was most pleasant, although my French was still poor. Anyway one of the young ladies, a Mademoiselle Andrée, was so charming to look at that conversation on my part was quite unnecessary.

Then came *Wigilia*, the traditional Polish Christmas Eve. Our first *Wigilia* in exile. Somehow it seemed to all of us as if suddenly our barracks was filled with the well known and loved cold, clear air of a December night in

Poland so far to the northeast! We celebrated it in our crowded mess hall. We had as guests some French journalists. Our Christmas tree was a big one—it reached right up to the ceiling. A strange silence fell over our group as we divided our *oplatek*, or holy wafer.

"May God grant that all our future Christmases be spent in a free and independent Poland," was our mutual unspoken wish.

As we sang carols, our thoughts fled eastward—to Cracow, to Kutno, to that little white house buried in the fruit orchard. Who of them was still living? How were they spending this *Wigilia*? Yet we didn't give way to desperation. Somehow faith and hope and a conviction that we Poles would soon have a brighter future sustained us all.

* * *

THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1940: WIGILIA IN DUNFERMLINE, SCOTLAND

We were in totally different circumstances from those in which we spent *Wigilia* the previous year. When France fell, the MS. *Batory* had evacuated us to Plymouth. There we were struck by the prevailing peace and order. It put new courage, comfort and determination into our hearts.

We sappers, were put to work almost as soon as we disembarked and that was our great good fortune. As luck would have it we were assigned to a technical group attached to armored trains. As soon as we completed our "basic training," we were assigned to trains that travelled to all corners of Great Britain.

In the meantime the invasion crisis and the blitz had passed their high point. The victorious march of General Wavell through Libya gave us fresh spirit. Our hopes once again rose.

We spent *Wigilia*, 1940, in this spirit. It was a dark night and the blackout made it even more gloomy. In the center of Glenpark in the concert salon that served as our temporary barracks, we celebrated our second *Wigilia* in exile. For a whole week before our artists cut and pasted various colored papers to make the bare room more cheerful. Caricatures of local residents gave the decorations a personal touch.

The hall filled with silent armored troops and here and there a feminine figure—most of them local Scottish girls and a few Polish ones, residents of Dun-



In Africa, 1941.

fermline. I was moved as never before in my life by the sight of those Polish girls. Perhaps they reminded me of my own mother and sister—still somewhere in Poland.

Holy wafers were divided, speeches were made and then someone started us off on carols. Then, after supper the party broke up as groups of twos and threes went off to private homes to spend the evening with Scottish families. I myself was the guest of Gwen. Despite her family's kindness, the warm fireside, the Scotch carols and all the rest of it, I was made even more lonely and homesick. It took me a long time to fall into a troubled sleep that Christmas night.

* * *

WIGILIA, DECEMBER, 1941, IN NIGERIA

Another year—one full of new impressions. We were transferred from Dunfermline to Equatorial Africa. Our ship sailed across the South Atlantic, past Dakar to Nigeria. Another Polish soldier, Tadek, and I were assigned to a post in the northern highlands of Nigeria. The landscape was grey and dust-covered in the dry season and green during the rains. Low growing cactus enclosed native villages and some rocky

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In Italy, 1943.

SEVEN CHRISTMASSES—THE ODYSSEY OF A FIGHTING POLE 1938-1944

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mountains provided the only break in the monotony of the highland plains. Aside from that, the region's only other outstanding features were a rather mild climate and some nearby tin mines. There were several small towns composed of beautiful European sections that were virtual garden spots, and of noisy native quarters. Such a town had rather nice stores, a motion picture theatre, a church, a hospital and a post office.

Tadek was absent for *Wigilia*. There were only three of us Poles at the post. Nevertheless, we decided to have a real Polish Christmas Eve. We decorated our "gida" or native hut that we used for quarters. These gidas are circular cottages made of unbaked bricks covered with a thatched roof. We decided to put our "Christmas tree" in one of them. I was given the task of finding an appropriate one. Since an evergreen was out of the question, I decided to dress a cactus substitute. My native "boy" brought me one of the large tree-like variety that grows there in abundance. He came back in a surprisingly short time triumphantly leading a little native girl who dragged a huge cactus behind her. I gave them both some English money. When my "boy" saw me putting the cactus into an earth-filled gasoline can and decorating it with gilt stars and chains of colored paper, he shook his head in amazement. The strange ways of white men were just too much for him!

Everything was ready before sundown. On the wall behind our "tree" I had hung the red and white flag of Poland. It was to be a real Polish *Wigilia*. The local priest had sent us some sherry and brandy. We even had handfuls of dried grass to put on the table.

We invited in our colleagues, the British officers from the post "to have a drink together." There we were three Poles, a Scots captain, an English lieutenant, and an army doctor.

In the light of the candles on the cactus, we broke a holy wafer and wished each other a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Then we all spontaneously broke into song with Polish and then English carols.

Just before midnight we Poles set off for town to attend Midnight Mass.

DECEMBER 24, 1942, CAPETOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

December, 1942, found me in South Africa on leave after a year in Nigeria.

At first I had hoped for a furlough back to the British Isles, but only men with families there were allowed to go. The rest of us were sent to South Africa. I shall never forget my first view from shipboard of Capetown with the flat mass of Table Mountain as a backdrop. Then our furlough began in earnest.

A few days later we went to Johannesburg, a great modern city not unlike American ones. There one day I was invited by Thelma R. for tea. By mistake I got off at the wrong floor of her apartment house and thus met Sonia. Ten days later we were married. Our honeymoon was the shortest month I ever spent in my life.



In the Netherlands, 1944.

Wigilia came just before the end of my leave. Fortunately, however, I was able to spend it with my wife and her family—her mother and 13-year old sister. This business of being a new husband was trying. I spent hours at stores and in the native bazaars trying to pick out the most appropriate gifts for my new family. On Christmas Eve, I introduced them to our Polish *oplatek*. Little 13-year old Betty didn't know what to make of these holy wafers.

"Zygmunt," she said turning to me in perplexity, "What am I supposed to do with it?"

"Just eat it, darling," I assured her.

Two days later I had to leave for Capetown. My boat was sailing within a few days and I had to return to Nigeria. I left with a light heart, however, for I learned that soon my tropical exile was to be terminated and that we were to be transferred to the newly forming Polish Army in the Middle East.

* * *

CHRISTMAS EVE, 1943, ITALY

Our wish had been realized, and we had been transferred from Nigeria to the newly formed Polish Second Army Corps. Two years spent there just because we had once had a wish to see the tropics was quite long enough. Perhaps sometime in the future we shall want to revisit Nigeria, but for the present we have had our fill.

For a time we trained with the Second Corps in the deserts of the Middle East. Then, because of our specialized sapper training in Great Britain, we were assigned to a commando unit that was sent ahead to the Eighth Army front in Italy. That is where I spent my fifth *Wigilia* in exile. We celebrated the occasion doubly, first by wiping out a German post on the day before Christmas and then in the traditional manner back in camp. It was a celebration tinged with great sorrow for we lost many friends that day.

Our patrol of December 24, 1943, began without any idea it would be different from the others that had taken place before. It was just another routine commando attack on a

sector of the German lines along the Garigliano River not far from Cassino in southern Italy.

It was almost dawn and beyond the mountainous banks of the little Italian stream the sky was already red from the first rays of the rising sun. Smoke from artillery fire rose along the river banks. It was the day before Christmas, December 24, 1943. I kept repeating that to myself, only half able to believe it.

Our commando patrol was cautiously slipping along the jagged mountain path. Unseen we drew closer to the enemy's positions, hidden in the bushes of a small ravine.

Suddenly the dead silence was shattered by shots which sprayed us with rock fragments. We all ducked into the bushes. Some crack German sharpshooter had spotted us even at that distance. The sniper was already trying to retire unseen, but his position was revealed when the sun shone on his steel helmet. Our shots found their mark, and he paid with his life for his foolhardiness.

Now that our way was again free, we moved quickly up a barely visible goat path, among rocks and shale. Wladek, our corporal, wanted to let the Germans have a blast from our machine guns, but Captain W. stopped him in time—

"You won't hit him anyway from this distance," he said. "You might as well wait and not reveal our position until our men have better range."

It was dangerous to pause even for a few minutes. Not far away, on the ridge sheltering our path was a little peasant hut. An Italian family stood before it.

"Tedesco, Tedesco—German, German," cried the old peasant, telling us that the enemy occupied a neighboring cottage, a little lower down the mountain side. A detachment of Germans was already then moving up the path.

The Germans were scarcely 50 feet away from our position. At that short distance the fire poured on them from our Tommy guns had a murderous effect on the ranks of these supermen. They dropped like flies.

When Captain W.'s gun jammed, he flourished it even more menacingly than before and, yelling like a wild Indian, leapt over the wall, landing in the midst of the Germans. After an agonizing moment of suspense, we saw seven figures dressed in the hated field-gray uniform stand up, raise their hands over their heads, and march toward us. They were dispatched under guard to the rear.

But the noise of our brief struggle had warned other German units nearby. We were again under fire from their heavy machine guns. The battle was fierce. Captain W. again led the attack. He was everywhere at once, giving commands, helping with jammed guns, pulling wounded out of the line of fire.

Captain W. was our last victim. He ran forward to help

one of our wounded. As he bent over the soldier, bandaging his wound, a sniper's shot broke the short silence that had fallen. The captain stiffened for a minute, then fell beside the injured man. He was dead when we reached him.

We returned to our own lines in time to celebrate *Wigilia* that evening, but it was a sad celebration. So many of our comrades, including Captain W., were not there to break the holy wafer with us and to help us wish each other mutual good fortune during the coming year.

* * *

CHRISTMAS, 1944, SOMEWHERE IN HOLLAND

Wigilia this year found me in Holland with General Maczek's Armored Division. It was my sixth *Wigilia* in exile, my second away from my wife in South Africa.

We had captured Breda some weeks earlier and were advancing northward toward the great Dutch port of Rotterdam. In order to drive the Germans out of the western Netherlands, we had to cross a wide, heavily fortified canal.

That canal did not constitute our only difficulty. The surrounding territory was equally difficult terrain for an attacking force: Meadows covered by wide deep sheets of icy water with only the high road and some dykes remaining above water. But the Germans held these sole dry spots in splendidly fortified posts.

The bridge over the canal, over which the main highway ran, had been blown up by the Germans. That was where we sappers went to work rebuilding the vital span. Scarcely had we finished repairing it when German artillery, by a lucky shot, blew it to pieces again.

Then there was nothing else to do but cross the canal on boats and rafts. Standing waist-deep in that ice-cold water, Polish soldiers ferried across their equipment. Once on the northern side, they held and drove back the enemy until we were able to rebuild the bridge and send over heavy armor to reinforce them.

On the day before Christmas we were in Moerdijk, resting and awaiting further orders. In this vital city on the Hollandsch Diep, we celebrated *Wigilia*.

Snow fell outside, but the Dutch house that served as our temporary barracks was warm and pleasant. We had decorated it as best we could for the coming holiday. Since we were in a far advanced sector of the front and since the countryside had been laid bare by the Germans, our *Wigilia* supper could not possibly consist of the traditional Polish dishes. Nevertheless, our *oplatek*, the table decorated with straw and some wine the friendly Hollanders had given us, made our simple meal of field rations a true Christmas feast. Let us all hope that it is the last we spend in exile, far from our beloved Poland!

CHRISTMAS IN PAIN AND HOPE

(Continued from page 3)

been and are suffering; millions have been and are fighting, certainly not for the purpose of passing from one slavery into another. The Polish underground soldier and the one who fights on foreign fronts will have the right to demand an accounting of what has been done with the slogans of freedom, justice and democracy, with the ideals for which he shed his blood. For that blood of his which he shed unsparingly he wants to have the freedom, the independence and the territorial integrity of Poland guaranteed.

Once upon a time the Star of Bethlehem was the herald of a new life. It proclaimed "Glory to God on High and Peace on Earth to Men of Good Will." Millions of people the world over are praying for that peace, a peace of freedom, a peace of justice. They pray that the world be ruled by

right and Christian ethics, and not by violence and godlessness.

In spite of steadily growing adversities we still keep faith in the victory of right. Otherwise, the present war would be but a prelude to another, still more atrocious, wherein all our civilization would perish.

And this is why we continue believing that in spite of all the devastation, life will again bloom among the ruins.

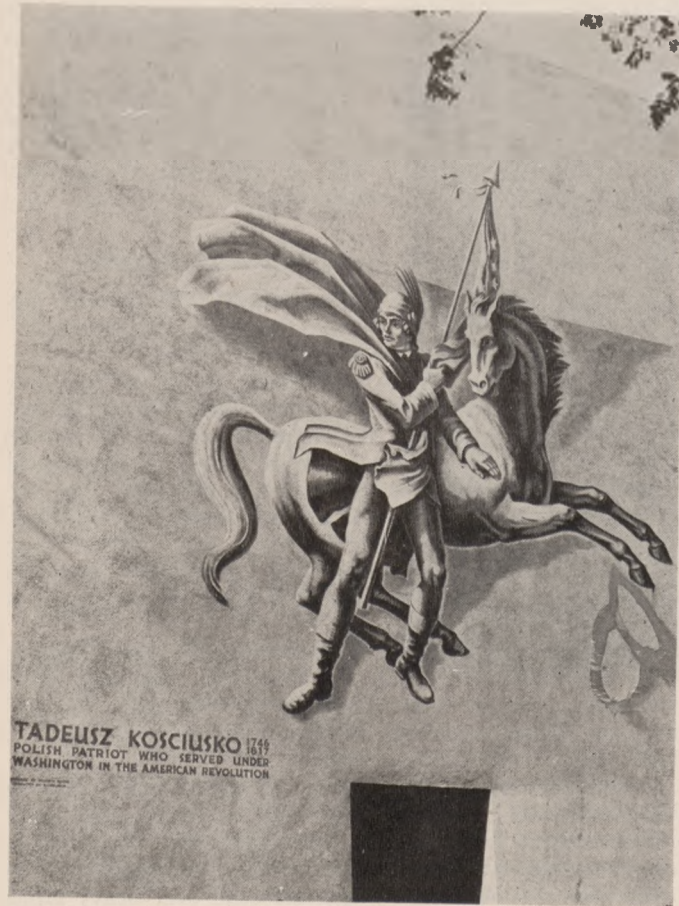
We believe that in a few years, not only in America, the happy land of freedom, but also in martyred Poland the lights of joy and happiness will again burn bright on Christmas Day—in Cracow and Wilno, Poznan, and Lwow and—in Warsaw rising from her ruins.

We hope that one day in Poland we shall hear again that most beautiful music of free people: the laughter of a happy child.

How Pulaski and Kosciuszko Spent Christmas Eve in Trenton, New Jersey*

by JOZEF IGNACY

KRASZEWSKI



Tadeusz Kosciuszko, mural from the "Heroes of the American Revolution" cycle at the New York World's Fair, 1939-1940.

ning star appears in the sky, and we shall think of our distant country."

"God bless you! That's the right idea. But where shall we get the holy wafers? You know there cannot be a Christmas Eve supper without wafers—by no means!"

They racked their brains in vain. Finally they decided that wafer or no wafer, they would have their *Wigilia* supper with hay under the table cloth and with a Polish sheaf of wheat in the corner of the room.

A sheaf! Where would they get a sheaf of wheat, or for that matter any kind of Polish grain, here in America? And yet that sheaf was indispensable on Christmas Eve. They had to have it to remind them of Poland.

Maciej Rogowski didn't dare ask where the money to pay for all that was to come. He knew full well that none of them had any.

Karol had a gold watch and chain, a gift from his father. He had kept it throughout the campaign. He hesitated a while. He felt some regrets—yet he had to sacrifice it for his beloved general. He sold it to cover the expenses of the *Wigilia* supper.

The main thing now was the *oplatek*, or holy wafer.

Everything could be omitted or replaced except that wafer. It could not be substituted by anything else. They could have a *Wigilia* supper without the various traditional Polish dishes, but there could be none without a wafer.

He decided that perhaps he himself could bake a wafer, when he was told that in a nearby settlement there was a French priest who used to celebrate mass for a handful of Catholics.

He mounted his horse and in no time was on his way to the priest. He had already passed by the last houses of the settlers, when all of a sudden he met a rider, apparently a traveler. The latter was not good looking, but he had an extremely pleasant face, such a Polish face, that Karol stopped his horse. The traveler's horse carried a heavy pack. A guide accompanied the stranger. A stranger he was, beyond all doubt, for Karol who knew everyone in the neighborhood, had never seen him.

With a military salute the stranger asked in English: "Can I find Brigadier General Pulaski in Trenton? You certainly are from his brigade. I am afraid to miss him."

The stranger's English pronunciation betrayed a foreigner.

Instinctively Karol replied in Polish:

"You must be a Pole, a brother!"

They both jumped from their horses and embraced each other cordially.

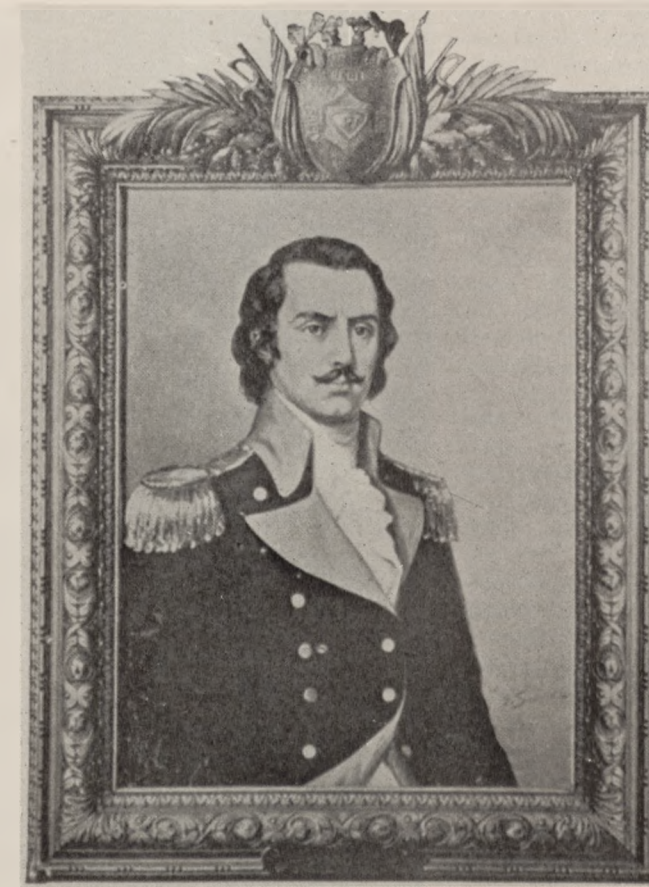
"I come from Canada purposely to meet Pulaski, my name is Tadeusz Kosciuszko."

"We have heard of you, sir. The general will be happy to make your acquaintance. My name is Karol Pluta, I am the general's aide."

"Brother!" answered Kosciuszko, "you do not know how good it feels to hear the Polish language, to see a brother when one has lived so long among foreign people."



The Gateway Site. Trenton, New Jersey, 1777.



General Kazimierz Pulaski

Had they met their closest friend in Poland, they could not have been impressed so deeply as they were then—strangers meeting in a foreign country. They stood silent for quite a while, deeply moved, looking at each other and repeatedly shaking hands.

At last they mounted their horses and rode towards Trenton. Pulaski was glad to meet his compatriot.

Wigilia had assumed a specially solemn character for the hosts. They couldn't stop talking of their country, of things past and present.

"Listen, Maciej," said Pulaski in an aside, "it is our traditional duty to receive our guest, especially a brother from Poland, according to our timeless customs. Sell or pawn, or borrow—do whatever you can—to show him how pleased we are to entertain him."

"General," replied Rogowski, "Karol and I have thought of everything. Everything will be ship-shape. But do not forget that tomorrow is *Wigilia*—a fast

day, until the Christmas Eve supper."

"Oh yes, that's right! *Wigilia*," replied Pulaski sadly.

They talked all that night. They interrupted their conversation to start it anew after awhile. They spoke of Poland—and though each of them came from a different part of the country—their feelings and reminiscences were the same. Kosciuszko, from the Brzesc district, had lived for quite some time in Mazovia and in Warsaw. He had known the King and the Czartoryski family, and many prominent people of his day . . .

Rogowski easily persuaded Pulaski and Kosciuszko to wait with their dinner until the first star appeared in the sky. Then only were they to have their *Wigilia* supper. Both gladly agreed. They went for a long walk, to see the countryside. They returned without having seen anything, for they had other things on their minds: they were talking of the Vistula and Bug rivers.

Finally the sun set. Karol waited for the appearance of the first evening star. He had everything ready for the occasion.

He felt the excitement of a schoolboy about to play a practical joke . . . He went to the little garden where the two commanders were taking a walk.

"General," he said with a mischievous smile, "supper is served."

"Oh, yes, supper," replied Pulaski. "Have your fun, if you wish, *Wigilia* supper in America! It is not our Polish Christmas Eve supper—that sacred, fraternal repast . . . Anyhow, let's go and consume whatever God has given us . . ."

He took Kosciuszko by the arm and made for the second floor. Karol directed him to the ground floor.

"It is here," he said.

"Here?" asked Pulaski. "What for?"

"It just so happens," said Karol.

A colored servant opened wide the door.

The usually bare walls of the hall had a changed, festive appearance. They were decorated with green branches of cedar, fir and yew trees. The brilliantly lighted table was covered with a snow-white cloth with hay underneath. In the corner stood a large sheaf of wheat reminding the guests of the Polish emblem of the farmer's labor.

Pulaski stopped on the threshold, dazed by the sight.

It was then that he noticed a wafer on his plate.

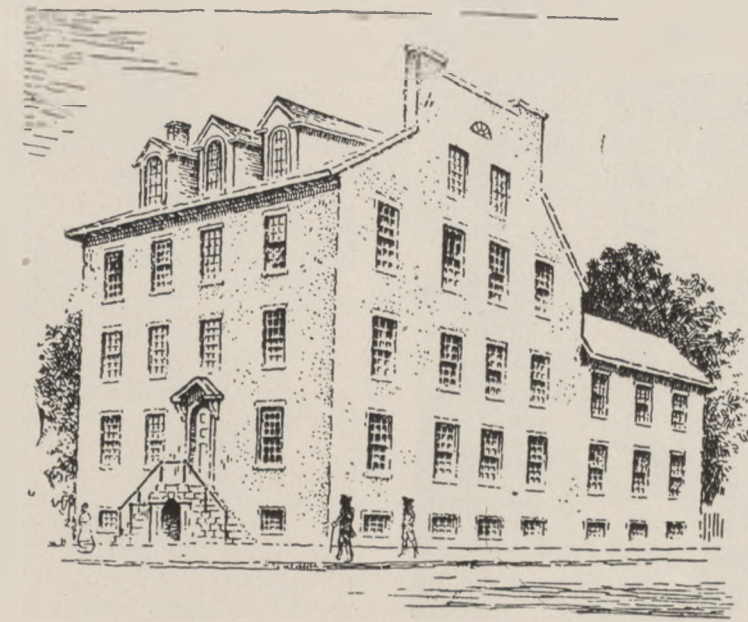
Tears came to his eyes, and unable to speak, he cordially embraced Karol, his faithful aide.

Finally he said, "My good old friend, only a man with your heart of gold could have done all this."

With a trembling hand he offered the wafer to Kosciuszko and whispered, "When you return to Poland and break the *Wigilia* wafer with your brethren, remember me and Trenton."

In a great solemn silence, they all shared the wafer, the life bread of exiles, with hearts longing for their native country, for their families and friends who, they felt sure, were thinking of them too this Christmas Eve.

Great happiness filled (Please turn to page 18)



French Arms Tavern, southwest corner of State and Warren Streets, Trenton, New Jersey, 1777.

*From the novel *Exiles* by Jozef Ignacy Kraszewski, (1812-1887).

THE ANNUNCIATION IN POLISH ART

by DR. IRENA PIOTROWSKA



National Museum in Cracow
The Annunciation, Cracow School, second half of the 15th century.

days of Poland's restored independence, some masterpieces depicting the Archangel Gabriel bringing the joyous message to the Virgin have been produced, that belong to the greatest treasures of Polish art. They occur in easel and mural painting, sculpture in relief, lithography, wood engraving, and stained glass. They adhere in style and conception to Western European art.

The first known *Annunciation* ever created dates from the second century after Christ. It decorates one of the vaults of the Catacomb of Priscilla in Rome and shows a woman seated, while before her stands a youth stretching his right hand

THE ANNUNCIATION is a comparatively rare subject in Polish art. It is to be found much less frequently than some of the beloved scenes of the Christmas story, such as the *Nativity* or the *Adoration of the Magi*, and even much less often than representations of some favorite saints, as for instance *St. Francis of Assisi*. Still, during the eclosion of Polish medieval art in the latter part of the fifteenth century, and during the revival of Polish religious art in the

lifted as if in an announcement. It is true that the Mother of Christ and Gabriel are here conceived in the style of the Pompeian lay frescoes and have little in common with the deeply moving and pious figures of the *Annunciations* of later epochs, but the simple composition of the second-century painting, so faithfully rendering the event briefly described by Saint Luke in the Gospel, has passed into Western art, including Polish, forever.

Of course before the composition of the *Annunciation* was definitely stabilized, other attempts to interpret this scene had been made by early Christian artists. These were based on the Gospel of Saint James which tells us that while Mary was going for water to a brook she heard a voice calling her; frightened, she returned home and resumed weaving the purple tissue for the Temple; then the angel appeared to her with God's message. Thus Mary at the spring or Mary weaving, or even spinning, may be seen in early Christian mosaics or on ivory reliefs. However, beginning with the thirteenth century, Mary at work does not occur any more in Western art, although Mary weaving has become popular with Byzantine art and all art remaining within the sphere of Byzantine culture.

In Italy, the most beautiful representations of the *Annunciation* were created by Fra Angelico during the first half of the fifteenth century. A noble image of purity and modesty, she either stands, sits, or kneels at a prayer-desk, an open book before her, and listens attentively to the divine message, slightly withdrawing in fear. The angel Gabriel is usually presented in profile, standing or kneeling, deeply moved, with crossed arms, or holding a flowering lily, at times his hands demonstrating and teaching. The scene most often takes place within a cloister arcade. In northern Europe, notably in Germany and in the Netherlands, the *Annunciation* scenes are placed in interiors of wealthy homes, full of realistic details.

In medieval Polish *Annunciations*, Italian and north-European influences meet. But out of religious respect, Polish artists never introduced actual chambers into their paintings and sculptures, just as they never endowed the Madonna with portrait-like features.

The earliest Polish *Annunciation* that, apart from miniatures, has come down to us, is preserved in St. Mary's Church in Torun, Pomerania, and dates from about 1390. It is one of a series of paintings decorating a polyptych, among



The Annunciation, wood engraving by Stefan Mroczewski.

place in a Gothic cloister. Indirect Italian and direct Bohemian influences, the latter at the time very strong in Polish art, are noticeable in the Torun painting.

The arrangement of the two figures on it, and the relation between them, also their emotional attitude, have become typical for all Polish *Annunciations* of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period. A very similar composition is met with on the beautiful *Annunciation* which decorates one of the walls of the Franciscan Monastery in Cracow. This fresco must have been painted soon after 1436 by the same master who executed the adjoining *Stigmatization*. It is considered to be the most beautiful of all the wall paintings still preserved in the cloisters of the Franciscan Church, and it breathes the same spirit of piety and devotion as Fra Angelico's creations.

which also the first known Polish *Adoration of the Magi* and *Stigmatization of St. Francis* are to be found. In the *Annunciation*, the Virgin is shown kneeling at her praying desk, with her hands folded, an open book before her. Interrupted by the Archangel Gabriel approaching from behind, she turns around, still concentrating on her prayers. The angel is just kneeling down and stretches out his right hand in a persuasive gesture, as if trying to make her understand the importance of his message. It is one of the most dramatic representations of the *Annunciation* in Polish art. The scene takes



Archangel Gabriel, from the wooden altar-piece at the Church of Our Lady in Cracow. By Wit Stwos, late 15th century.

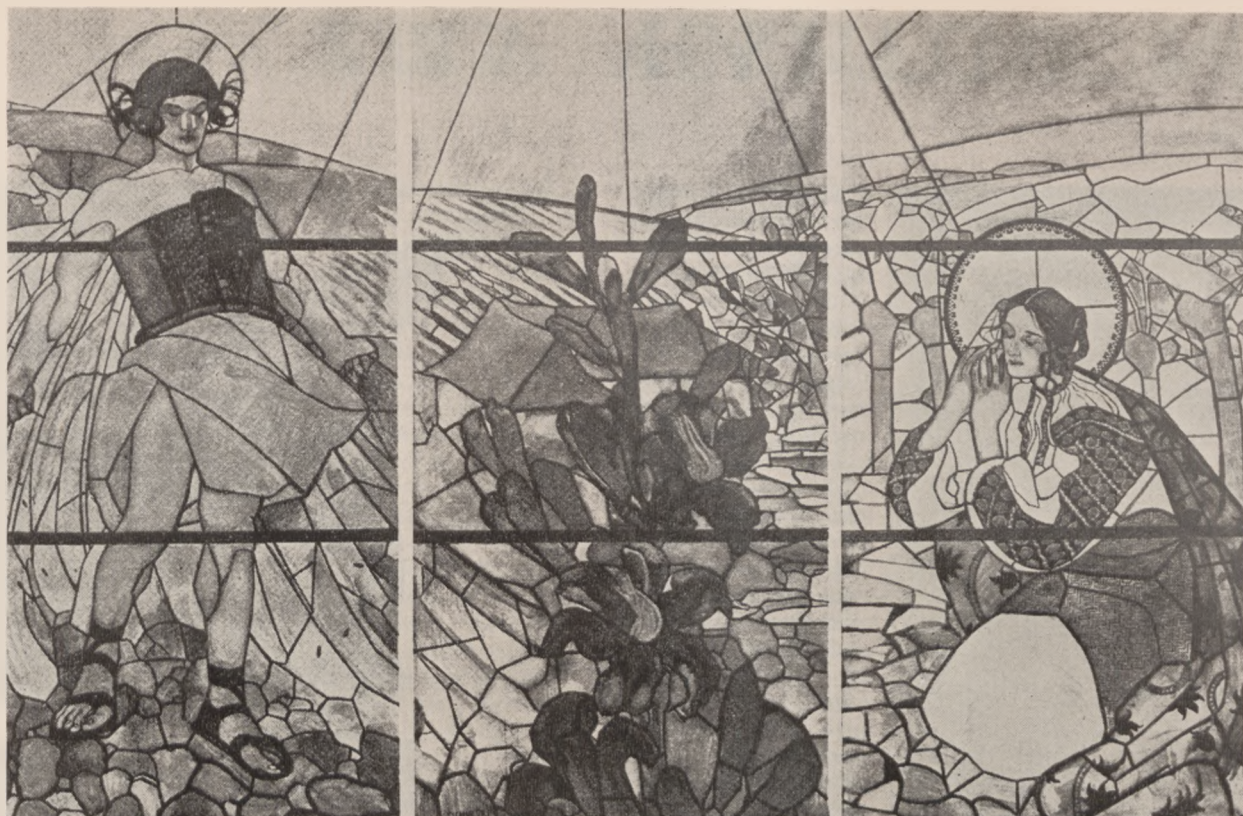
Somewhat later is the *Annunciation* preserved by the National Museum in Cracow, painted with tempera on wood. (Please turn to page 12)



The Annunciation, modern lithograph by Maria Obrebska.



The Annunciation, mural painting in the Armenian Cathedral in Lwow. By Jan Henryk de Rosen.



The Annunciation, stained glass by Kazimierz Sichulski.

THE ANNUNCIATION IN POLISH ART

(Continued from page 11)

While the influences of the art of the Netherlands are discernible here, the arrangement of the two figures is one which most often occurs in Polish art. The angel persuasively speaks to the praying Madonna who turns around toward him. In his hands he carries a scroll with the salutation: "Ave gracia plena dominus tecum." The golden background is typical of Polish medieval and early Renaissance paintings.

The rich, broken folds of the Angel's and the Virgin's robes suggest that the creator of the Cracow *Annunciation* must have already known the gigantic wooden polychromed altar-piece at the Church of Our Lady in Cracow, carved in honor of the Blessed Virgin by Wit Stwosz between 1477 and 1489. On one of its wings a beautiful *Annunciation* is sculptured in high relief.

The *Annunciation* that forms part of Wit Stwosz's world-famous triptych in Cracow shows the Mother of God sitting to the left of a bench and attentively reading from her prayer book. She has not yet noticed the angel who approaches her from the right and raises his hand in salute. The scene of utmost simplicity, is of unspeakable charm and full of serenity. Wit Stwosz has exerted an influence on Polish sculptors that lasted far into the sixteenth century. But it is interesting that most of them, while carving the *Annunciation* scene, in spite of Wit Stwosz's influence, returned to the beloved traditional composition, which places the Madonna to the right, facing the wall and kneeling at her prayer desk, turning around at the sound of the approaching angel.

Such is also the composition of an *Annunciation* in Klecko in Poznan, forming part of a series of sculptures and paintings signed and dated by a certain "Matheus pictor cognomine Kossyor, civis Posnaniensis Anno Domini 1596." While a pure Italian Renaissance style had been flourishing in Poland for at least three quarters of a century, this Poznan painter still adhered to the medieval style. His *Annunciation* bears also some traits of folk art, discernible in the great stress the artist put on the expressive side of his work, which meant more to him than anatomical correctness. The color-

ful wings of Gabriel, the flowers strewn on the floor of the room, augment the affinity of this painting with folk art, which in its pure form, however, developed only about a century later. But Matheus Kossyor, citizen of Poznan, is a most interesting precursor of Polish religious folk painters.

Still, it must be emphasized, that curiously enough, no *Annunciation* occurs in Polish folk art. Not a single scene on this subject may be detected among the many folk paintings, carvings, and wood engravings which have been preserved from the late seventeenth, the eighteenth, and the nineteenth centuries and which are in a great number devoted to The Madonna. Folk artists have shown her preferably alone with the Infant in her arms, at times accompanied by St. Joseph or St. Ann.

As Polish folk paintings, sculptures, and engravings formed a connecting link between Polish religious art of the Middle Ages and that of modern times, the absence of scenes on the *Annunciation* among them brought about a lack of continuity in the development of this subject in Polish art. This lack was not filled by the few *Annunciations* sculptured or painted by Polish professional city artists of the Baroque and Rococo period, as they adhered to art movements coming from abroad and were not attentive to local traditions.

The line of the broken continuity in the development of the *Annunciation* in Polish art was never taken up by Polish artists. When during the twentieth century a revival of Polish religious art set in, none of the Polish artists searched for inspiration in Polish local painting of the past ages. Those who were attracted by the meaningful and poetic scene of the *Annunciation*, either produced original compositions, unrelated to any of the preceding conceptions, or turned for guidance directly to that land, where this subject first appeared in art and later brought its most savory fruits, to Italy.

Thus, for instance, did the young Polish woman painter, Maria Obrebska, when she worked on her extremely beautiful *Annunciation*, executed by means of lithography. Its

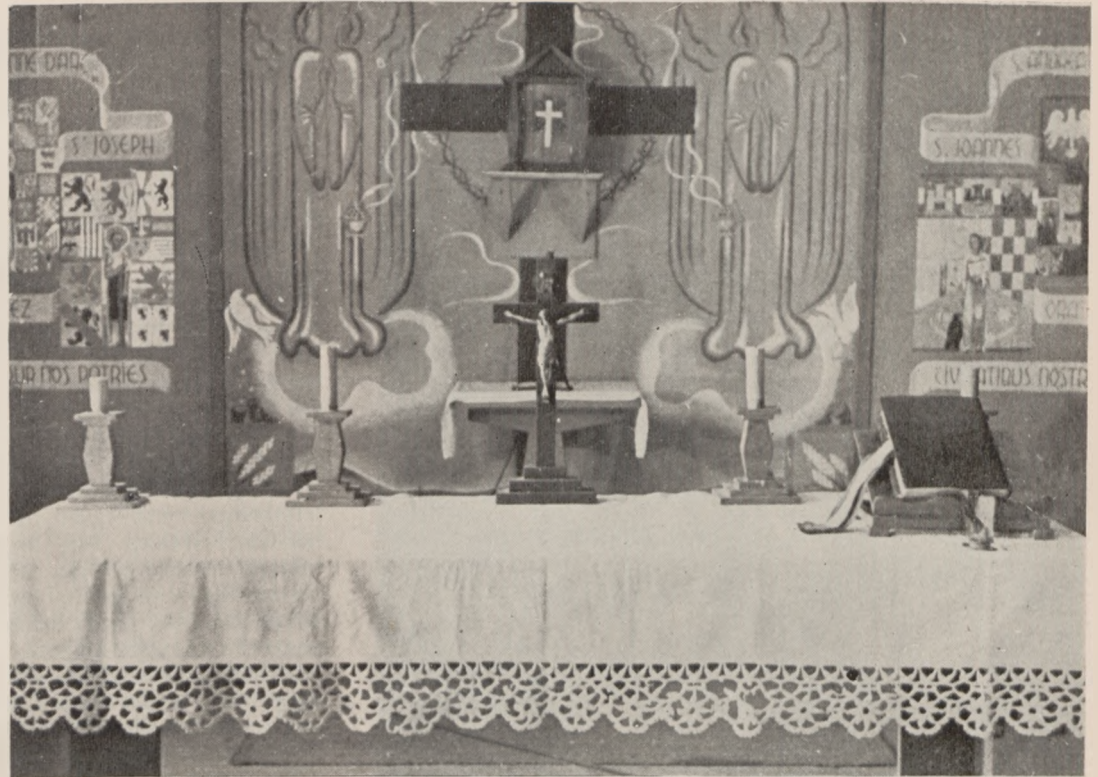
(Please turn to page 18)

IN A PRISONER OF WAR CAMP

by AN ESCAPED PRISONER OF WAR

FOR several days rumors had been going about the camp that we were to be sent to a punishment *Stalag*. Finally rumor became fact. First we were all thoroughly searched, then packed into cattle cars. Our train had to wait 18 hours on a siding until a locomotive came. The journey took three days and two nights. As we entered the new camp, some German guards informed us that we were criminals, instigators, and brigands who must now receive "special treatment." This "treatment" began when we were divided up into groups and some were sent to heavy labor in stone quarries and marshes that were being drained. Only one small group remained in the main camp. As I was one of this latter group, I experienced my first Christmas in a German prison camp.

Two days before *Wigilia*, a German officer came to inform us that Germans are "humanitarian" even toward criminals, and therefore that our battalion would be allowed to take part in a Christmas Eve celebration in the camp theatre. He also told us that the camp commandant himself was anxious to hear the choir that we had organized—that he had even announced a contest to see who



Polish Prisoner of War Camp Chapel in Stalag XI B, Germany.

of the prisoners could best sing "Silent Night" in German.

We went to their theatre, but we never had a chance to sing carols in German. However, we entertained them with several Polish carols and a Serbian marching song, "To Arms, To Arms!"—whose words, luckily for us, none of the Germans understood. The commandant's speech was characteristic. He began it with these words: "Friends, you prisoners from France and Belgium, and enemies, you Poles . . ." At his words our whole battalion sat up at attention. Silently we all agreed with his involuntary tribute to us.

We returned to our barracks in the company of a German officer of the guard. A little Christmas tree stood in a corner of the hallway. It had been decorated by prisoners—they had hung on it letters and pictures received from family and friends in Poland, for these are the sole treasures of a prisoner. Under the tree were some wooden shoes, torn shirts and belts—a symbol of our poverty. On the wall behind the tree we had hung miniature replicas of the flags of the United Nations. The German was

(Please turn to page 19)



Polish Prisoners of War in Germany, drawing by a fellow Prisoner of War.

POLISH TALES BROUGHT TO AMERICAN CHILDREN

by HELEN GOODWIN



At the New York Herald Tribune children's book exhibit.

"A LONG, long time ago, the little Christ-child was born in a far away country, in a stable among the animals.

"There were His Mother and Saint Joseph as well as a good ox, a gentle ass and the other beasts who watched over the Christ-child.

"When the news of His birth spread, everyone hurried to the stable to pay Him homage. There were kings, and shepherds and just simple town-folk.

"When the children of the village learned the good news, they too wanted to welcome the little Baby and to bring Him gifts.

"It was a clear Christmas night, and so the children followed the little bright star in the skies until it led them to the stable where the Christ-child was lying in His manger.

"And oh what a crowd came to the stable to greet the Christ-child!

"And what gifts they brought with them!

"There was the Kubus boy, who brought a big, black cock. And a very proud strutter he was!

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" he cried in greeting.

"And here was the little Hanka girl with a cake of fresh cheese for the Christ-child.

"The little Franus boy came, dragging his goat on a rope.

"And right in front was Basia, the goose-girl, with a big, fat goose under her arm.

"Behind the children you could see the Kujawiak couple, the newlyweds, with the whole jolly wedding party from Krakow, even the musicians."

And then this charming Polish folk tale of the Christ-child, entitled *Lullaby*, or Why the Pussy-Cat Washes Himself So Often, goes on to tell how the Babe listened with great joy to the music and singing until all the excitement made Him wide awake. Try as hard as she would, His mother could not get Him to sleep. Neither Saint Joseph nor the good ox, nor the gentle ass were able to help her.

Just as she was at her wit's end, she saw a tiny tiger-cat curled up in a far corner of the stable. It was little Purry-whiskers, who had followed the crowd here, and had been left behind. She called to the kitty and asked him to sing her Child to sleep. But Purry-whiskers was ashamed to show himself because he was so sooty from sleeping in the ashes. So he began to wash himself very carefully—his chin, his whole face, the patch behind his ear, each of his four paws and even the tip of his tail.

When he was all finished, he pattered up to the manger, hopped up, curled himself at the Christ-child's feet and began to purr the perfect lullaby that every kitten knows:

"Ah,—Ah, Pussies gay, One wears stripes, and one is gray, One is short, The other tall, And I love them, Big or small.



My Village by Janina Porazinska. Cover by Erica Gorecka-Egan.

Mew—Mew, Pussy do; One white mitten, one white shoe, Though you're small and even fat, you are still my pussy-cat!"

"Ever after that night," concludes the legend, "Purry-whiskers made sure never to be caught again with a smudgy face. And that is why you see him washing himself so often."

This legend of the Christ-child and the pussy-cat has been adapted from the Polish by Josephine B. Bernhard of the New York Public Library and published in 1944 by Roy Publishers of New York as *Lullaby* (\$1). Writing about *Lullaby* in "The Horn Book" for July 1944, Anne Carroll Moore, the prominent specialist in children's books, has this to say: "Out of the heart of Poland comes a spirited Christmas picture-story book—a book so refreshing and original, so utterly unlike any children's book we have had before as to take a new and high place of its own among children's books published in the United States in the 1940's . . . Irena Lorentowicz, the distinguished painter and theatrical designer, whose double-page drawings in color and many decorations in black and white will be of as much interest to artists as they are to children, regards her illustrations as an expression of her 'gratitude to fate.' Bringing to American children the richness of Polish romanticism, they are rendered with rare simplicity and freedom of line and they have a rhythmic quality which makes them fairly dance and sing on the page. Humor and reverence are present at the same time, just as they often are in the minds and hearts of children, and so seldom are on the pages of books designed for them."

Janina Porazinska was a favorite author with Polish children. She published fourteen books between 1923 and 1937—simple and dramatic tales based on legends, folk stories and folk sayings. Two of her books, *My Village* and *In Voytus' Little House*, have been translated by Lucia Merecka Borski of the New York Public Library and published with Stanislaw Bobinski's original illustrations by Roy Publishers for children between the ages of four and seven.

My Village (\$1.25), a delightful story of little Yagusia in a Polish village, is partly the picture of familiar things seen through the luminous eyes of the child and partly founded (Please turn to page 19)



Voytus' Little House by Janina Porazinska. Cover by Erica Gorecka-Egan.



Illustration by Irena Lorentowicz for Josephine B. Bernhard's *Lullaby*.

THIS USED TO BE WIGILIA IN WILNO*

by PVT. LEONIDAS DUDAREW-OSSETYNSKI



Polish Carolers, sculpture in wood, by Karol Tchorek.

...ACCORDING to regulations, the lights in the barracks had been put out at nine o'clock. It was raining outside, a penetrating late-December Alabama rain. Inside, the space heater's friendly glow broke the blackness of the barracks.

Almost everyone was asleep. Even Pvt. Jan had finished his daily letter to his wife and turned in. Only Pvts. Mark and Vincent were drying their soaked uniforms and good-naturedly cursing the rain that had been coming down steadily for two weeks.

"Sweet Alabama," murmured Vincent and made for his bed...

I wrapped my overcoat snugly about me and gingerly slipped between the icy sheets. I

could not fail asleep for a long time. My thoughts revolved about the approaching holidays. These in turn summoned haunting memories that would not be suppressed.

Half dreaming and half day dreaming, I saw small houses blanketed with snow and branches of the nearby trees laden with fluffy white down... familiar windswept streets.

Where? When? How long ago?

It must have been a long time ago.

Why is everyone rushing so?

The stores are filled with shoppers. Bewhiskered porters scrape the well beaten snow from the sidewalks with shovels and ice choppers, swearing softly at the heavy snowfall. But for us snow lovers this is a delight that means additional days of fun and pleasure.

Snowballs fly thick and fast through the frosty air. At the entrance to the park, eighth grade students have made a huge snowman. His eyes and nose are of coal. A broom—the porter's mace—projects from under his arm. The porter from whom this important tool was borrowed, smiles and mutters, "Oh, those children, those children."

The Lukiszki market square in Wilno is a hubbub of activity. The greatest crowds are at the fish stalls. Children snatch handfuls of hay from peasant carts to place them later under the tablecloth for the *Wigilia* (Christmas Eve) supper.

A miniature forest of Christmas trees has grown overnight in "Orzeszkowa Square." Mothers, grandmothers and aunts, surrounded by assorted children, are kept busy selecting and bargaining.

*Pages From a Soldier's Diary, Camp Sibert, Alabama, 1943.

The young woman with flashing brown eyes, radiating health, is my mother. And that youngster hanging on to her skirt is none other than myself.

We pick out the greenest tree and I insist on taking it home, all by myself on my little sled. An old man hoarsely insists "my dear kind lady, it cost me more than that." Another old man, who delivers the trees, isn't too willing to be engaged. "What," he says, "carry such a big thing all the way to Losiowka for only half a zloty? Why, I'd wear out more shoe leather than I would make. No, lady, you'd better look for another fool for that job."

From the half-opened doors comes the tempting smell of some tasty dishes. Appetites are whetted but no one is permitted to eat until evening. The tradition of fasting on *Wigilia* day must be observed. But perhaps a small potato or a tiny piece of herring would not violate the tradition.

Our Christmas tree is decorated behind closed doors, but the



By Zofia Stryjenska.

keyhole offers just enough temptation to peek through. From the outside, the delighted voices of children ring out in chorus. "Mother! Mother! The first star has appeared!"

The day's fasting has come to an end and the evening of festivities begins. It is a solemn occasion at which the lady of the house serves everyone, including the servants. And it is extremely important to have an even number of persons seated at the table.

The hay underneath a fresh white tablecloth scents the air and blends with the aroma of special dishes prepared for the occasion. The fragrance of the



By Zofia Stryjenska.

lights are put out, bowls of nuts, raisins and fruit, and Christmas cakes and candies are passed around.

Candles on the tree flicker and cast off their faint yellow rays. A nearly invisible but highly odiferous trail of smoke rises snake-like toward the ceiling. The burning, crackling logs in the hearth add their share of warmth, light and atmosphere.

Scattered about under the tree, covered with a thin layer of artificial snow, are the Christmas presents. Sparkling-eyed rosy cheeked children hold their breath as they unwrap each package, bearing their name on a small but colorful card. The "oh's" and "ah's" of the happy and excited small fry are the best reward parents can receive for their efforts, joys, sorrows and tribulations of the past year. The older people open their presents, too, with greater calm but no less

Christmas tree adds to the *Wigilia* atmosphere. Before the meal begins, the master of the house breaks off a piece of the holy water placed on his plate and exchanges it, according to tradition, with every member of the household. All exchange best wishes and all hearts are filled with the spirit of forgiveness. Old scores are forgotten as sworn enemies become loyal friends.

"Peace on Earth, Good will to Men, for Christ is born this Christmas Day."

This is a Polish *Wigilia*.

The feast symbolizes "The Last Supper." Twelve types of dishes, prepared in their individual style are served only once a year, at this time. The meal must begin with a soup which may be either the famous deeply colored *barszcz* or beet soup, or a special almond soup. In the soup are delicious ear-shaped dumplings with mushrooms. Then come all manner of fish, broiled, fried, baked or boiled. Vegetables of various sorts accompany the fish, invariably including cabbage. A long stick of rich bread filled with poppy seeds and a compote of dried plums, pears, peaches and cherries complete the dinner. When the



Wilno Cathedral at Christmas Time.

pleasure. On this day of days, the humblest hut is blessed with gifts.

Joy and laughter fill the house after the contents of each package have been minutely examined and the curiosity of all thoroughly satisfied. Before long, the voices of young and old ring out with Christmas carols: "Today in Bethlehem...", "Christ is Born...", "In the Stillness of the Night...", and "Slumber, Little Child Jesus..."

The pealing of the church bells interrupts the festivities and reminds everyone it is time for the Midnight Mass. At first, the youngsters are reluctant to go to bed, but quickly consent when they are permitted to take their new toys with them.

Wilno's streets are teeming with smiling merry-makers who liberally exchange kisses, hearty handshakes and good wishes. These are not empty gestures but sincere wishes for health, good fortune and cheer, springing from the very depths of their hearts and souls.

Churches are filled with the devout who have come to pay homage to the Christ Child in the Manger. Even the bells sound differently at this hour, probably because of the church bell ringers' exuberance. Their melodic tones echo and re-echo throughout the entire city.

When the first snow falls in Wilno, the clatter of horses'

(Please turn to page 19)



By Zofia Stryjenska.

THE ANNUNCIATION IN POLISH ART

(Continued from page 12)

poetic qualities remind one of Fra Angelico's paintings, and it distinguishes itself through the same lovely, light color harmonies, so perfectly suited to the scene represented. As in Fra Angelico's works, the event takes place in a cloister. The Madonna, an open book before her, sits with closed eyes at her desk. The angel has just knelt down and bends his head slightly in reverence. He holds a roll with the words of salutation. He himself does not speak up, he makes no attempt to explain to her the meaning of the message he has brought, a point which has seemed so important to medieval artists of Poland. It seems that The Madonna has absorbed the message without a word being spoken.

The simplification of design, the flat surfaces and broad outlines, are at once in accord with the simplicity of Fra Angelico's drawing and with that of many a modernistic art work.

Modernistically simplified are also the outlines of Stefan Mrozewski's *Annunciation*, engraved in boxwood. Here the composition is completely new and original. The scene is set in an ideal space, filled with rays of light pouring down from the dove of the Holy Ghost. The Madonna, a very young girl in a most simple attire, kneels facing the spectator. Her slightly bent head, her outstretched hands, express her complete surrender to the will of God. Gabriel, a handsome youth without wings, reads devotedly the salutation from a roll inscribed in Polish. To the right of the *Annunciation*, a shepherd watches his sheep, further on, the Three Kings proceed toward the Bethlehem Manger. These two additional scenes are so delicately engraved that they seem to be mere apparitions and do not compete with the main event depicted.

The world-admired technical skill of Mrozewski, his unlimited fantasy, his deep emotional qualities, all combine in his *Annunciation* to make it a perfect masterpiece.

Unprecedented in conception is also the *Annunciation*, in stained glass, by Kazimierz Sichulski. The scene takes place in the fields. The Madonna, shown as a Polish peasant woman, has knelt down, her eyes are closed in devotion, her hands folded. Gabriel is girdled with a broad peasant leather belt, he stands, his hands sowing seeds in the barren soil. The two figures are separated by a large blooming flower and a peasant cottage visible in the distance.

And again different are the two *Annunciations*, both mural paintings, by Jan Henryk de Rosen, now professor at the Catholic University in Washington, D. C. His earlier *Annunciation* forms a part of his series of frescoes decorating the ancient Armenian Cathedral in Lwow. Both the Virgin and Gabriel are standing. The angel salutes the Madonna with his right hand uplifted. In the background, Christ carrying the Cross appears.

Rosen's second *Annunciation* has just been finished at the Cathedral of the Holy Rosary in Toledo, Ohio, where the artist has decorated the ceiling with the Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary. In this most recent *Annunciation*, Rosen turned for inspiration to one of the earliest conceptions of the theme at times occurring in Early Christian art. The Madonna is shown drawing water from a brook as Gabriel approaches. Small rocks in the background, a meadow full of flowers, golden carnations ornamenting the Virgin's pink dress, add to the poetic atmosphere of the scene.

HOW PULASKI AND KOSCIUSZKO SPENT CHRISTMAS EVE IN TRENTON, N. J.

(Continued from page 9)

them when they sat down at the festive table. True, the Polish barszcz with "earlets" was missing and the other dishes did not have the same taste that they had in Poland. Yet the colored cook had done his best by putting plenty of pepper, when in doubt, in any dish, for he believed that there was nothing better to fool the palate. Nevertheless he had succeeded in preparing an excellent fish with sweet potatoes and palm cabbage.

The guests lingered long at the table, sipping their drinks and talking plenty.

Late that evening one of them recalled the old Polish custom of pulling blades of hay from under the table cloth. According to tradition the one who pulled the longest one was to expect the finest harvest.

"Let us draw," said Pulaski. "May these blades of grass of the new world forecast that we are going to reap a good harvest."

True, that American hay they were pulling from under the table cloth had very little in common with wheat or rye. Pulaski pulled a dry, unknown flower; Rogowski a long tuft resembling Polish buck-wheat; Karol a stalk still green but with half-faded leaves.

Kosciuszko to his amazement, drew a young branch of laurel leaves . . .

They all laughed, attaching no importance to what they witnessed. But Pulaski declared, "The laurels are yours, Tadeusz. God give you plenty of them. I drew a dried stem with a faded flower, a lifeless thing . . . Will that be all that I shall leave to posterity?"

They rose from the table.

Once more they shook hands; once more they embraced each other, and then they left for their quarters not in search of sleep, but to dream of their beloved, yet so very distant country.

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Front Cover: *Infant Jesus Amid the Ruins of Warsaw* by Witalis Guranowski.

Back Cover: Polish Christmas tree at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry.



POLISH TALES BROUGHT TO AMERICAN CHILDREN

(Continued from page 15)

on Polish folk tales. Yagusia understands what the oak door says when it squeaks and knows the song of the kind snow coming down to bring a white sheepskin for the dry trees, a woolen coat for the straw man and a dozen thick comforters for the roof of the barn.

Yagusia also knows the scarecrow who catches young sparrows and hides them in his trouser pockets. She listens to the old mother hen playing a fiddle for her children as they dance on the garbage pile and talks to the cricket who sings little Johnny to sleep.

Yagusia loves her village more than any other. She describes it thus: "My village is a row of cottages stretched between small fields. Each cottage has a thatched roof which smiles to the world from among its plum trees; each cottage has a painted door and a high threshold, leading to its little hall.

"Mallows, God's plants, gaze from their narrow flower beds, and sun-flowers with their bright golden faces bend over the fences. Fowl scratch the ground for food in front of the houses, and shaggy dogs guard the gates. There are many men and women in my village and almost threescore children.

"There may be more beautiful villages abroad, but they can not charm my heart. Even though my road were paved with gold, I would not cross rivers looking for better fare in foreign lands, for I love my village. Do you believe me? I believe you, I believe you."

The *San Francisco News* comments that Porazinska "depicts a child's everyday life with strong suggestive power and approaches folk poetry in her dramatic directness. The realistic colored pictures by Stanislaw Bobinski add to the enjoyment of this unusual book."

"From the vast store of old Polish legends," writes the *El Paso Times*, "come the short, appealing tales that make up *In Voytus' Little House* (\$1.25). The reader is transported far away to old Poland, where magic and make-believe and the visits of fairies were things easily accepted. In these short stories inanimate objects take on life with naturalness

and ease and the salty wisdom of some of their suggestions is part of the heritage of Polish childhood."

Many wonderful and unusual things happen in Voytus' house, which are not noticed by grown people. "The brooms dance, the pots and pans quarrel, the ragdoll hides out of spite, and the sparks in the fire-place tell stories to the children." Voytus likes best to say in the kitchen. He likes to watch the dough flow out of its kneading trough, to see the broom and the poker dance, to observe the grey frost, crouching in front of the cottage, paint the window panes. Voytus is fascinated by the ugly stain on the floor, which he hears say:

"I am a stain on the floor, and here I will sit for good and ever. I am in my own house, and I will not budge for anybody."

"Out jumped a broom from its corner: shur, shur, it swept the room; shur, shur, it scrubbed the floor: 'Ugly stain, go away from here!'

"I am a stain on the floor, and here I will sit for good and ever. I am in my own house, and I will not budge for anybody."

"Out flew a duster on its grey foot: hoppity, hop, all the dust from under the bed; hoppity, hop, what a stirring even: 'Ugly stain, go away from here!'

"I am a stain on the floor, and here I will sit for good and ever. I am in my own house, and I will not budge for anybody."

"Out jumped a boiler hot from the oven. The stain said all over what it had said before; the boiler did nothing but make a splash.

"Oh, how it burns!" screamed the stain. It wailed for a time, then crept away . . . four miles behind the stove."

Both of these stories of Polish childhood have captivating and unusual outer and inside covers designed by the young Polish-American artist, Erica Gorecka-Egan.

The three enchanting volumes published by Roy, the refugee Polish firm that specializes in presenting glimpses of Polish literature and culture to the American reading public, are certain to prove appealing to American children.

IN A PRISONER OF WAR CAMP

(Continued from page 13)

thunderstruck when he saw what we had done. He turned pale with rage and gave us one more "compliment"—"Only Poles could do such a thing!" He stormed out of the barracks. We were left alone for the rest of the evening.

By some miracle, a French chaplain got through the wires to our part of the camp. He conveyed Christmas Greetings in the name of the French prisoners. He brought some non-consecrated communion wafers as *oplatek* or Christmas wafers. We all sat at the rough table. In the center we placed the white wafers, while before each prisoner was a mess-tin with a few spoonfuls of fruit "compote." One of our colleagues had received a package of dried figs about a week earlier, so, although they were bitter and strange-

tasting, we had made a compote by pouring some cold water over them. Besides the fruit, we had for our *Wigilia* supper, black bread and two cigarettes apiece, the latter purchased at the camp's black market.

The oldest prisoner amongst us began a speech with the words, "Dear brothers," but the rest of it stuck in his throat. We could no longer control ourselves. Some immediately left the table to roll up in their thin ersatz blankets and tried to sleep on our board beds. Others sat about in dark corners, lost in their sad thoughts.

Our compote remained untouched, our celebration of *Wigilia* was at an end.

As we sat about in the dark, the thoughts of each one of us were with our loved ones in Poland.

THIS USED TO BE WIGILIA IN WILNO

(Continued from page 17)

hoofs and iron-bound wheels on the cobblestones is replaced as if by magic with the silent glide of sleighs over the snow-covered streets. Only the rhythmic jingle of tiny bells and the muffled sound of horses' hoofs suggest the city's ever flowing traffic. Hack drivers decorate their cabs and horses with brightly colored plumes and myriads of shall shiny trinkets. The festive mood is reminiscent of a dress rehearsal before a great performance.

Elaborate one-horse sleighs, heaven sent for lovers, veer about in every direction with their fur-swathed occupants. He whispers sweet nonsense in her ear, and she smiles and turns

her pinkish nose in the opposite direction. They are lost to the world and the friendly stares of those they pass by.

The martial airs played by army bands signal the end of the Midnight Mass as the crowd hurries home to seek refuge from the frost of the winter night air.

Spotlights play on the Three Crosses high up on a hill, against the backdrop of heaven.

Poland's white and red flag waves proudly from the old castle on another hill . . .

This used to be *Wigilia* in Wilno. Here in the barracks of Camp Sibert, it seems such a long, long time ago . . .

(Translated by Cpl. Bronislaw Gliwa)

